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25 November 1968

**MEMORANDUM FOR:**

[REDACTED] DDP/RMO  
[REDACTED] DDS/RMO  
[REDACTED] DDI/RMO  
[REDACTED] DDS&T/RMO

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**SUBJECT** : CIA Cable Reference File

**REFERENCE** : EX/DIR Memo dated 4 September 1968  
Subject: Purge of Inactive Records

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to, a) survey the requirements of Agency units for Cable Secretariat service from the reference file, b) to determine a firm retention period for the paper copy portion of the file covering the period 1 July 1963 to present date, and, c) to determine the desired retention period for CIA cables placed in the reference file from this date. The paper copy file contains 1,800,000 cables and occupies approximately 700 cubic feet of storage space in the Records Center. The remainder of the file is on microfilm, dating from 1941 through 30 June 1963 at which time microfilming of CIA cables was discontinued for economy reasons.

2. Cable Secretariat's Vital Records Schedule provides for daily deposits of all CIA IN and OUT cables. The copies are deposited as "Vital Records" for one year; thereafter, the deposits are papered as "Inactive Records" to be retained for an additional 14 years.

a) A Management Staff memo to D/DCI dated 27 December 1954 concurred in by DDP, DDI, DDA, and approved by D/DCI 8 February 1955 is the authority for CIA cables being designated "Vital Records" for daily deposits of paper copy.

b) The 15 year retention period for the file is a provision contained in a Management Staff Study dated 3 April 1963 which recommended transfer of Signal Center Archives to the Cable Secretariat. The recommendation concurred in by D/COMMO and DDP was approved by EX/DIR on 25 May 1963.

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3. A study is being made to determine the cost and feasibility of reverting to microfilm storage to relieve the critical space problem at the Records Center. A decision to restore a microfilm program will depend largely on the cost of the program and a confirmed need by the Directorates for reference service from the Cable Secretariat. The ultimate size of the paper copy file for the full 15 year retention is estimated at approximately 2,200 cubic feet. Should it be determined that a retention period in excess of 15 years is desired, and the file is maintained in its present form, the file could be expected to grow at an annual rate of 150 cubic feet. The 1963 Management Study estimated that "about \$150,000 could be saved by storing cables in the Records Center for 15 years rather than microfilming for the same amount of time." Accordingly, will each of you indicate for your Directorate:

- a) Your requirements for reference service (if none, please so state); *- ONCE IN 5 YEAR PERIOD.*
- b) The time span within which you will require retrieval of cables (5 years old, 10 years, 15 years, etc.); *I FEEL A 5 YEAR SPAN WOULD BE APPROPRIATE.*
- c) Desired retention period for CIA cables irrespective of the manner (hard copy, microfilm, other) in which the file is maintained; *SAME AS b) ABOVE.*
- d) Comments on present service. *NO COMPLAINTS - FEEL IT MOST SATISFACTORY.*

To give you some idea of the time span of current cable retrieval, a breakdown of reference requests processed during October 1968 is attached.

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Deputy Cable Secretary

Attachment  
a/s

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